

Walmesley (G.), Bishop of Rama.
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ENCYCLICAL LETTER

OF THE

B I S H O P S

OF

Rama, Acanthos, and Centuria;

TO THE

FAITHFUL, CLERGY and LAITY,

OF

THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICTS:

WITH A

CONTINUED COMMENTARY

FOR

The USE of the VULGAR.

L O N D O N :

Sold, for the Benefit of a poor Clergyman, by J. BELL,
Oxford Street, opposite Bond Street.

MDCCXCI.



TO MY
BOOKSELLERS.



ALTHOUGH the quantity of paper, ink, and workmanship, which has been employed to form this pamphlet, be somewhat less than is usually sold for a shilling; yet I strictly enjoin you not to sell a single copy under that price: and pray beware of counterfeits.

BOOKSELLERS.

TO ME.

ALTHOUGH the quantity of
paper, ink, and other things, which has been
employed to form this pamphlet, be somewhat
less than is usually sold for a printing; yet I
heartily entreat you not to sell a single copy
under that price: and pray beware of counter-
feits.



TO THE

Unprotesting, Undissenting Papists,

OF THE

Southern District of **ENGLAND.**

DEAR BRETHREN,

THE *African* bishop of *Cen-*
turia, become our present chief-priest, not
by our own choice, nor with our own con-
sent, but through the grace and authority
of our sovereign lord the Pope; has, in
conjunction with two *Asiatic* bishops (with
whom, however, we have nothing to do)
sent forth a THING into the world, called
an ENCYCLICAL LETTER; containing *Ar-*
ticles and *Determinations*; to which they
say,

say, we must strictly adhere. Now, it has been complained, that there are in this *letter*, as in the *letters* of St. Paul, several *things hard to be understood; which they that are unlearned and unstable, may wrest to their own destruction* *. I have therefore taken upon me the task of commenting on it: for which I only request your pious prayers. Farewel!

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

ENCY-

ENCYCLICAL LETTER.

CHARLES, *Bishop of Rama, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District*; WILLIAM, *Bishop of Acanthos, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District*; and JOHN, *Bishop of Centuria, Vicar Apostolic of the Southern District*.

To all the FAITHFUL, Clergy and Laity of those respective Districts.

WE think it necessary to lay before you the following Articles and Determinations :

1st, We are informed that the Catholic committee has given in, or intends to give in, a bill, containing an oath, to be presented to parliament, in order to be sanctioned by the legislature, and the oath to be tendered to the Catholics of this kingdom.

2dly, The

2dly, The four Apostolical Vicars, by an Encyclical Letter, dated October 21, 1789, condemned an oath, proposed at that time to be presented to parliament, and which oath they also declared unlawful to be taken. Their condemnation of that oath was confirmed by the Apostolic See, and sanctioned also by the bishops of Ireland and Scotland.

3dly, Some alteration has been made by the Catholic committee in that condemned oath; but, as far as we have learned, of no moment; consequently the altered oath remains liable to the censure fixed on the former oath.

4thly, The four Apostolical Vicars, in the above mentioned Encyclical Letter, declared, that, *None of the Faithful, clergy or laity, ought to take any new oath, or sign any new declaration, in doctrinal matters, or subscribe any new instrument wherein the interests of religion are concerned without the previous approbation of their respective bishop, and they required submission to those determinations.* The altered oath has not been approved by

us,

and therefore cannot be lawfully or conscientiously taken by any of the faithful of our districts.

5thly. We further declare, that the assembly of the Catholic committee has no right or authority to determine on the lawfulness of oaths, declarations, or other instruments whatsoever containing doctrinal matters; but that this authority resides in the bishops; they being, by divine institution, the spiritual governors in the Church of Christ, and the guardians of religion.

In consequence, likewise, of the preceding observations, we condemn, in the fullest manner, the attempt of offering to parliament, an oath including doctrinal matters, to be there sanctioned, which has not been approved by us: and, if such attempt be made, we earnestly exhort the Catholics of our respective districts to oppose it, and hinder its being carried into execution; and for that purpose to enter a protestation or counter-petition, or to adopt whatever other legal and prudent measure may be judged best.

B

Finally,

Finally, we also declare, that conformably to the letter written to the Catholic committee by the four Apostolical Vicars, October 21, 1789, we totally disapprove of the appellation of *Protesting Catholic Dissenters* given us in the bill, and of three provisos therein contained, and expressed in the said letter of the four Apostolical Vicars.

We shall here conclude, with expressing to you our hopes, that you have rejected with detestation some late publications, and that you will beware of others which may appear hereafter. Of those, that have been published, some are schismatical, scandalous, inflammatory, and insulting to the Supreme Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

† CHARLES RAMATEN, V. A.

† WILLIAM ACANTHEN, V. A.

† JOHN CENTURIEN, V. A.

London, Jan. 19th, 1791.

COM-

COMMENTARY, &c.

1. **E**NCYCLICAL Letter, &c. The very title of this extraordinary production demands illustration. Mrs. Coghlan and Mrs. Booker and Mrs. Baillie differ, the whole heavens-breadth, about its meaning.—Know then, that *encyclical*—pronounce *enkyklical*—is a Greek word derived from *kyklos* ; which signifies a *circle* : hence it might, with equal propriety, have been called a *circular* or *round-about letter* : but as every thing that regards religion, ought to be, more or less, wrapt up in mystery ; the word *encyclical*, was probably, deemed preferable on that account.

Charles Bishop of Rama. The first word needs no remark.—*Bishop* signifies *overseer*.—*Rama* (alias *Ramatha*, alias *Ramoth*, alias *Ramathaim*) is, undoubtedly, *Hebrew* ; and denotes a *height* or *hill* : here it means a town built on such a *height* or *hill*. But whether this *Hill-town* be in the tribe of *Judah*, or in the tribe of *Benjamin*, or in the tribe

of Ephraim, or in the tribe of Naphtali ; I have not yet been able to discover. I have written however to a friend at Rome to enquire at the *Propaganda* ; and when I receive an answer, it shall be made public.

Acanthos. In Greek (considered as a city) is equivalent to *Thorn-town* in English ; and it is probable, though not certain, that Bishop William's *Thorn-town* lies in Macedonia.—But, as I have already observed, we of the southern district are little concerned about the bishoprics of either WILLIAM or CHARLES.—JOHN, JOHN only, is our OVERSEER.—And he is—

Bishop of CENTURIA. I believe it should be written *Centuria*. However that be, it is certainly in the Numidian province of Africa. It had once a bishop, named *Quodvultdeus* : that is, *What-God-wills*. If its present bishop cannot assume that name, he may take one somewhat like to it ; *Quodvultpapa*, i. e. *What-the-Pope-pleases*.

Vicar Apostolic.—*Vicar* is a Latin word, which signifies *one who acts instead of another* ; *apostolical* is a Greek word derived from another Greek word, which signifies *one who is sent* : hence the twelve *disciples*, i. e. *scholars* of Jesus Christ, were called *apostles* ; as being *sent* by him to preach his
gof-

gospel to mankind.—*Vicar Apostolic* then is literally *one who acts instead of an apostle*; but in the present LETTER, the words denote a sort of *spiritual attorney*, commissioned by the bishop of Rome to act in *his* stead; with powers limited and revocable; as all powers of attorney should be.

We think it necessary. Although the plural number be here used, you are not to imagine that a plurality of persons is to be understood. For Charles of Rama and William of Acanthos, have no right to dictate articles and determinations to us of the southern district. The districts are totally distinct, and independent on one another; and the *vicar* of any one of them can no more interfere with the clergy or laity of any other of them, than the lord-lieutenant of Ireland can do with the people of Canada, or Hanover.

The *vicars* can form neither diocesan nor provincial, nor national synods; consequently their united decrees can make no general law: and at this moment, the catholics of the midland district may laugh at the Encyclical Letter of Charles, William, and John.—For Thomas, only, has a special power of attorney with respect to them.—The word *we*, then, means no more than John, Bishop of Centuria; considered, however, not as Bishop of Centuria; but as the pope's attorney in this district of England.

Articles

Articles and Determinations.—Some of my more scrupulous penitents have been strangely puzzled about the meaning of these words.—With respect to *articles*, it has been often asked me, whether it were necessary to join these [here] *articles* to those of the *creed*?—To prevent such idle queries in future, I beg they will attend to this answer : *Article* signifies a *joint* ; and, here, *articles* mean only the several *joints* of the Encyclical Letter ; and are neither articles of *faith*, nor articles of a *bill*, nor articles of time, nor articles of *stipulation*, nor articles of any sort ; commonly so called.

As to the word *determinations*, I myself am at a loss how to explain it. It cannot I think mean here *judicial decisions* : for there can be no such decision, where there is no competent tribunal ; and where every legal form of judgment is disregarded. — For *determinations*, then, read *declarations*.

I come now to the *joints* themselves. In *joint* the first, we are *informed*, “ that the vicars are *informed*, that the Catholic committee has given in a *bill*, or intends to give in a *bill*, &c.—It was not enough, one should think, to be informed ; they should have been *certain* of the fact ; a fact so easily ascertained ; and so necessary to be fully ascertained before

before any *determination* or *declaration* could with any shadow of propriety be founded on it. The truth is, the vicar's *informer* has been a false *informer*, who deserves no credit in future. The committee never presented a bill ; never intended to present a bill. They presented a petition indeed, praying the parliament for relief : but a *petition* and a *bill* are very different things. If authors would accustom themselves to write a little more correctly, they would spare us commentators a deal of trouble.—Let us believe however, that the vicars *intended* to be correct.

In *joint* second, we are told, what we knew before, that “ in October, 1789, four vicars condemned an *oath* ; and also declared that oath unlawful to be taken.” It has been said, by some committee-men, that the oath condemned should have been inserted both in the *Encyclical Letter* of 1789, and in the present one ; the censurable parts of it enumerated ; and the special reasons given, which moved those R. R. gentlemen to declare it “ unlawful to be taken ;” for without that, (say they) how shall either the clergy or laity be able to distinguish it from any other oath ; or know what dangerous doctrine is contained in it ?—This, to be sure is a specious plea : but I must answer, it would be highly unreasonable, in clergy or laity, to demand from pope's vicars,

vicars, any other reason for their approbation or disapprobation of oaths, than their *own will and pleasure*. It is enough for us, my brethren, that an oath has been condemned by the vicars, their condemnation " confirmed by the Holy See " (i. e. by the pope) and SANCTIONED also by " the bishops of Ireland and Scotland."

Here again I own it is to be lamented, that authors, and especially authors of Encyclical Letters, will not learn a little of grammar.—I was almost put to a *non-plus*, the other day to repel the critical attack made by a petulant protesting Catholic upon the above unlucky sentence, which he called a gross anticlimax*; and compared to the following lines in the *Treatise on the Art of Sinking, &c.*

And thou Dalhouffie! the great God of War!
Lieutenant-col'nel to the Earl of Mar!

" To *sanction*, said he, jeeringly, is to give a
" final ratification; and is much stronger than
" to *confirm*: Yet this sanction is here ascribed,
" not to the pope; but to the bishops of Ire-
" land and Scotland! What have the bishops
" of Ireland and Scotland to do with English
" Catholics? Truly this is a most curious *ency-*
" *clinal*

* i. e. Placing the wrong end of the ladder uppermost; or the cart before the horse.

" *clical* method of giving an obligatory power
 " to a vicar's decree."

You may laugh as much as you please, said I,
 —for what other answer could I give?—you
 may laugh as much as you please, said I, at these
little grammatical inaccuracies—beneath the no-
 tice of *great* men. I will ever insist that the
meaning of our vicars is *right*—And I maintain,
 that if they should take it into their heads to
 prohibit the reading of Thomas-à-Kempis ; or of
 the four gospels ; and if that prohibition were
 next *confirmed* by the Holy See ; and ultimate-
 ly *sanctioned* by the bishops of Ireland and Scot-
 land ; all good Papists would be obliged to ad-
 here thereto.

Joint the *third*, is a *syllogism* in form ; the
 only one in all the piece : for our vicars, I am
 sorry to say, pay as little attention to logic, as
 to grammar. For once, however, they are, or
 would be, logicians ; and this is their mode of
 reasoning : " Some alteration has been made
 in this condemned oath ; but that alteration, as
 far as we have learned, is of no moment : there-
 fore the altered oath remains liable to the censure
 fixed on the former oath."

C I wish

I wish with all my heart, that these unlucky words "as far as we have learned," had been omitted in the *minor* or second proposition; or had been repeated in the conclusion: for at present they make a most awkward appearance; and seem to give to understand that the vicars had never "seen" the alteration—but had only "learned" that it was of no moment.—I trust they will be able to clear up this matter.

The fourth joint has more difficulties in it than all the rest: Though the first part is only a narrative of what four former bishops did two years ago; yet it is narrated in such a manner as may lead some weak people to suppose, that they (the present vicars) sanction the declaration of their predecessors by reporting it. I must endeavour to shew that this cannot be the case: For,

1st. They do not express their approbation or disapprobation: and therefore they are to be considered as mere historians.

2^{dly}. It is not likely that they would adopt and authorise so ridiculous a declaration as is here quoted.—A declaration which confounds matters of *doctrine* with matters of *civil polity*; and puts a yoke on the necks of Christians, which

which no earthly power can lawfully impose! For it not only prohibits the taking of any oath and the subscribing of any instrument, which have been positively *disapproved*; but even such as have *not* been positively *approved*. It cannot possibly, therefore, have been the intention of the two new vicars at least, (men of such consummate learning, judgment and liberality of sentiment) to adopt a declaration—which to say the least, could never be the product of any one of these qualifications.

Hence I cannot but suspect, that in what they have added of their own; namely, "The altered oath has not been *approved* by us, and therefore, &c." There is a grievous error of the press: and that the original had "has been *disapproved* and *judicially condemned* by us, &c."—For how in the name of heaven, does it follow; that because a vicar has *not approved* an oath; therefore it "cannot be lawfully taken by any of the faithful in his district!" Are we then to be bound by mere negatives?—and must we conceive every thing to be actually *forbidden* that has not been formally *approved*?—Forbid it Heaven, that we should suppose our vicars, I mean *our* vicar, capable of ever exercising such tyranny over us!

The fifth joint of this, not too well jointed, composition, consists of a positive declaration, "that the assembly of the catholic committee has no right or authority to determine on the lawfulness of oaths, declarations, or other instruments whatsoever, containing doctrinal matters."

I have nothing to observe on this, but that our vicars seem to have made this declaration against a chimera of their own creation. The assembly of the committee never claimed any such right or authority, as is here denied to them.

As to the addition that "This authority resides in the bishops," I must for the sake of timorous minds, make a few remarks on it. If by *doctrinal matters* the vicars understand *articles of divine faith*, or *maxims of gospel morality*, they have certainly, as guardians, (not *the only* guardians) of religion, an authority, (not *the sole* authority) to watch over the sacred depositum, and to see that neither faith nor morality be altered or infringed: but as they have no authority to coin a new article of faith or establish a new maxim of morality; so have they no authority to condemn an *oath* or any other *instrument*, unless it contain something contrary to faith or morality. And in the supposition that such an *oath* or *instrument* were under their consideration; they would be obliged to point

point out in the most explicit manner, what parts of them are immoral, what parts are heterodox: that is, what parts are contrary to faith or morality.—As, then, neither the vicars of 1789, nor the vicars of 1791, have pointed out in the projected oath the smallest deviation from faith or morality; we may be assured that they found none to point out; and, consequently, that by *doctrinal matters*, in as far as we are now concerned, must be meant something else than faith or morality.—What that is, their reverences will be pleased to explain, in their own good time. It is ours to wait with patience for their explanations.

Whether our *vicars* be *bishops* “by divine institution” is a question which may be *catholically* disputed. The *right divine* even of ordinary and regular bishops, is not an article of faith, any more than the *right divine* of kings *. But whether *irregular* bishops of Rama, Acanthos and Centuria, are by divine institution, the “spiritual governors” of the *English Catholics*, is a question, I say, that may be fairly and orthodoxly disputed; and I am of opinion, that it requires neither much discussion, nor deep knowledge to decide without ambiguity.

* The matter was often and warmly agitated, in the council of Trent; and at length hushed into rest, under the cover of two equivocal canons. See Sess. 23. an. 1563.

But

But how shall I, my brethren, be able to explain to you what follows!

“ In consequence, likewise, of the preceding observations, we condemn, in the fullest manner, the attempt of offering to parliament an oath, containing doctrinal matters, to be there sanctioned; which has not been approved by us.”—Here is a strange jumble of words, that would puzzle Oedipus himself to unravel. I attempt it, therefore, with diffidence; and would not have attempted it at all, if I had not your good so much at heart.

First of all, then, the word *likewise*, must be ejected as a mere intruder, that has no business here.

Secondly. Instead of *preceding observations*, there is an absolute necessity of reading—I know not well what; but, certainly, something very different from the present reading; which I take to be one of the inexcusable blunders of the vicars' printer.—For it is not possible to believe that any vicar or vicars, could, from the *preceding observations* in this Encyclical Letter, deem themselves authorized to condemn and to condemn in the fullest manner, the mere attempt of offering to

to parliament * an oath, which they have never seen ; and of which only they have been *informed*, that it is not materially different from another oath, which other vicars *condemned*, and which the present vicars have *not approved* !—But to continue our commentary :

“ And if such an attempt be made,” say they,
 “ we earnestly exhort the catholics of our re-
 “ spective districts to oppose it, and hinder its
 “ being carried into execution ; and for that
 “ purpose, to present a protestation or counter-
 “ petition, or to adopt whatever other legal and
 “ prudent measure may be judged the best.”

For God's sake, my Lords ! and for your own and our sakes, reconsider and expunge this odious passage ; which places us in the sad dilemma, either of disregarding your earnest exhortation or of being reputed bad citizens.

For supposing (what is not true) that the bill and oath included in it, had been actually framed by the committee, and by the committee offered to parliament ; how could we effectually oppose

* This too is an improper phrase. The committee have made no attempt to offer an oath to parliament. This is a false supposition (I am sorry for it) that runs through the whole Letter.

it ? or by any legal or prudent measure hinder its being carried into execution ?—" By presenting to the same parliament a counter-petition !" —Well, my Lords ! have you sufficiently considered what must be the tenor, and what would be the consequence of such a petition ? I am almost certain you have not ; else you would never have suggested so dangerous an expedient. However, in case such a Petition be, in the end, thought necessary, I am ready to draw up one ; which, if I mistake not greatly, will perfectly answer the purpose.

As for us, my fellow-papists, if our spiritual governors obstinately persist in thinking this expedient necessary for our salvation, we must, implicitly, however reluctantly, obey ; and must use our best endeavours to revive all the national prejudices that have been entertained against us for these two centuries past.

" Finally,"—I am happy to come to this pleasant word—"finally, (say the vicars)—we also declare that we totally disapprove of the appellation of *protesting catholic dissenters* given us in the bill."

There is surely somewhat very extraordinary in this composition, in respect to the choosing of terms.

terms—here we are told that the vicars totally disapproved of the appellation of *protesting* catholics ; and just before they had exhorted us to “ present a *protestation* to parliament.—But perhaps it is the final epithet *dissenters*, that spoils all, and contaminates its two preceding associates ? yet it, certainly, is not easy to discover any heterodoxy lurking in this trissyllable. But God grants to Vicars Apostolic a superior ken, and more penetrating eyes, than to other men ; and it is sufficient for us, that they *tell* us, that they *see* harm in a *word* or *syllable* : our duty is, to reject without examination, such a word or syllable, however innocent it may appear.—And although *protesting Catholic dissenters* be a less odious appellation than *unprotesting undissenting Papist*, we are, obliged under pain of damnation, to prefer the latter.

They also disapprove of “ three provisoes in the bill :” but, as they tell us not what these are, we cannot comment upon them.

They conclude with expressing their hopes, that *we* have “ rejected with detestation some “ late publications ; and that *we* will beware of “ others which may appear hereafter :”—a wise, a very wise caution this ; if they had, at the same time, given us an *expurgatory index* of such pieces, written or to be written, as we are to reject and detect.—At present we are left to mere conjecture ; and, after long meditating on the subject, my conjecture is—that the publications, here alluded to, must be the following :

1. A dialogue between a protesting Catholic dissenter and a Catholic.
2. A letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Reeves.
3. The clergyman's answer to the layman's letter on the appointment of bishops.
4. Considerations on the modern opinion of the fallibility of the Holy See.
5. A discourse delivered at the consecration of the Right Rev. William Gibson, Bishop of Acanthos.

At least, these are the late publications, that seem best to deserve the epithets which the vicars here bestow on those which they wish us to reject—For all of them are more or less, and respectively, “schismatical, scandalous, inflammatory; and, (above all) insulting to the SUPREME HEAD of the Church; *qui, pourtant, n'est pas le Pape.*”

Thus, my brethren, have I done my best to explain to you, what Mr. Pilling, Mr. Greenham, and some other of our learned men, have, too rashly, deemed inexplicable: but I am not so vain as to imagine, that there is no room for further illustration. Perhaps the best means of making the LETTER intelligible to the laity in general, and to Mrs. Baillie and her fair pupils in particular, would be to turn the whole of it into rhyme; and there is no person, whom I know, so peculiarly fit for the task, as HE who,

who, some years ago, so harmoniously verified the catechism. If, through humility or want of leisure, that gentleman should decline the pious undertaking, I may be induced to attempt it myself, in case the present commentary should prove insufficient.

I was finishing the last word of the last line, when Lady ***, Mrs. ****, and Miss ***** came puffing and blowing up three-and-thirty nine-inch steps, into my garret; and asked me with great emotion and with one voice "If our bishops could write?" "Write!" said I, "my good ladies; what do you mean? I have been just now commenting on an *Encyclical Letter* which they have written to you, and to me, and to all the faithful of their districts."—"Sir!" said they (all together) "Sir! Sir! Sir! be not affronted, if we ask, what then is the meaning of those crosses before their names?"—"What think you?" said I. "Why, to be sure we thought—Laud, Sir! be not affronted—we thought as how that it was—their MARKS, Sir!"

Although I could hardly help smiling at this curious conceit; yet I constrained my risible muscles; and, assuming a face of gravity and a tone of importance—"Ladies," said I, "never sport with holy things. The cross is the glory of every Christian, and is, or ought to be, the
"special

" special glory of Christian bishops. On that
 " account, it is carried before them in solemn
 " processions; they wear it on their breasts, and
 " prefix it to their names.—The two last privi-
 " leges, however, are not exclusively theirs.—
 " The one you at present share with them; and
 " you may share the other whenever you please:
 " for there is no *canon*, yet, nor *letter encyclical*,
 " prohibiting even women from prefixing crosses
 " to their signatures; any more than wearing
 " them on their breasts."

The ladies went away highly satisfied with my
 solution of their question; and I was equally
 well pleased, to have been the instrument of re-
 moving from their tender minds the vile sugges-
 tion " that our bishops could not write."

Should any other difficulty, or case of con-
 science, respecting the forefaid *letter*, occur to
 any of the faithful of the London district; parti-
 cularly of the pious fair sex, (who are apt to be
 more scrupulous than we men are;) a note (post
 paid) addressed to the Rev. Mr. F. No. 9, Old
 Jewry, up three pair of stairs, shall be answered
 immediately; or personal attendance given, if
 required, on the very lowest terms.—Strict secre-
 cy may be depended upon.

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The E N D.